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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 002264

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [AG](#)

SUBJECT: ALGERIAN MOD AGREES TO COOPERATE ON BLUE LANTERN

Classified By: Ambassador Richard W. Erdman: reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (SBU) On November 8 the Ministry of National Defense sent DATT a letter whose bottom line, after four paragraphs of venting over the freeze on license authorizations, was that the Ministry has agreed to provide &certifications of receipt for all materials of American origin.⁸ Prefatory language in the letter notes the Ministry,s regret and surprise at the &Department of State,s8 decision to freeze export license authorizations for Algeria. The Ministry, the letter plaintively continues, does not understand the reasons for such a decision, in view of the political will of each side, our excellent political and economic relations and, in particular, the development of U.S.-Algerian military cooperation in recent years. Nor does the Ministry understand why such a freeze should extend to contracts with non-American firms working with U.S. firms.

2. (SBU) The letter also criticizes the September cancellation of a joint DSCA/State visit, implying the issue might have been resolved earlier had the delegation come. &If the question of a certificate of final use is the principal reason for this decision, it is appropriate to point out that the Ministry of National Defense was prepared to receive a delegation of American experts to discuss this question. The visit was unfortunately cancelled by the U.S. on the eve of the departure of this team for Algiers.⁸ In any case, the letter contends disingenuously, &Algeria has never responded negatively to the American requests on this subject. On the contrary, it informed the Defense Attache that the request was being studied and evaluated in terms of Algerian law and regulations.⁸

COMMENT - RECOMMENDATION

3. (C) The Defense Ministry,s letter is welcome news, despite the swipes at the Department and the self-serving interpretation of the leadup to our freezing the export license authorizations. Admitting honest error and backing down is not exactly a part of this proud nation,s culture, so if a little venting is the price to pay for getting this issue to come out right, so be it. In this regard, we know that President Bouteflika was briefed on this issue by presidential Chief of Staff Belkheir following the latter,s conversations with the Ambassador, and there are some indications Bouteflika may have engaged on this issue, making clear to the military he did not agree with their stance and wanted this problem resolved. In any case, assuming the promised certification letter is satisfactory, we should take the high road and be as forward-leaning as possible in our response, treating the Blue Lantern issue as a temporary misunderstanding, moving quickly to lift the authorization freeze, and making clear that putting this issue behind us will open doors for expanded cooperation. More specifically, we recommend that we:

-- reschedule as early as possible (early December?) the visit of the DSCA/State team that was cancelled in September in order to encourage better communication, clear up any residual misunderstandings, build good will, and brief on systems Algeria has expressed interest in.

-- take advantage of such a visit to have an initial discussion of when we might schedule the session of the Joint Military Dialogue.

-- have DOD A/S Rodman, in his capacity as the head of the U.S. JMD delegation, send a warm letter to Minister-Delegate Guenaizia, welcoming the positive decision as a step that will open doors to greater cooperation and noting that he looks forward to visiting Algeria for the next JMD

-- take advantage of Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gaid-Salah mid-November visit to General Jones to reinforce our positive reaction to the Ministry,s decision to cooperate on Blue Lantern.

ERDMAN